

# WOMEN

## A FORCE IN BUSINESS

NOVEMBER 19, 2019 | RALEIGH, NC

### Jess Ekstrom Founder Headbands of Hope



During the summer of 2011, Jess Ekstrom participated in an internship at a wish-granting organization for kids with life-threatening illnesses. She discovered that a lot of kids losing their hair to chemotherapy loved to wear headbands after hair loss, but they were only given wigs and hats.

Armed with inspiration, she spent her junior year at North Carolina State University developing her company, Headbands of Hope. For every item sold, a headband is given to a child with cancer. By the time she graduated, she had donated thousands of headbands to kids with cancer and was elected to give the commencement speech at her graduation to 20,000 people.

Along with her business, her message started to spread across America. Jess speaks over 40 times a year to campuses, corporations and conferences. She's keynoted at Leadercast Live, SAS Global Forum, Women's Business Summit, Citrix and more. Jess focuses on increasing workplace engagement and employee empowerment through meaningful work and establishing a healthy relationship with failure.

Today, Headbands of Hope is in over 2,000 stores across the United States and Canada. They've been featured on the TODAY Show, Forbes, Seventeen, Vanity Fair, People Magazine, Good Morning America and the headbands have been worn and supported by celebrities such as Lauren Conrad, Lea Michele, Molly Sims, Tiffani Thiessen and more. But their biggest accomplishment has been donating over 350,000 headbands to every children's hospital in America and across 15 countries.

In the past year, the company has launched impact initiatives such as hosting proms at children's hospitals and starting their #BandTogether program where they partner with a childhood cancer charity and donate proceeds from sales to their mission. They've also joined hands with art therapy by having the patients create their own headbands with the flower crown kits they provide.

Jess was named the Women's Health Magazine Ultimate Game Changer in 2017 and was also honored as the Most Outstanding Alumni of NC State University. In 2017 she also received the 'Entrepreneur of the Year' award from Atlantic BT. A Huffington Post article named her a limit breaking female founder. She also serves on the board of District C to help high school students solve real world problems and she regularly visits prisons to help inmates get jobs.

Jess is also a professional speaker and has a book coming out with Harper Collins in November 2019. She's also the founder of [Mic Drop Workshop](#), an online course with the mission of empowering more women to share their message as a speaker.